



# IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **FOOD STAMP PROGRAM PERFORMANCE RECOGNIZED BY FEDS**

The Idaho Department of Health & Welfare has received a \$485,000 performance bonus from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for significantly improving its Food Stamp error rate in 2006. The bonus could be doubled with federal matching dollars if it is applied to further improvements in the Division of Welfare.

The USDA announced the bonus in a letter to Governor C.L. "Butch" Otter. Idaho is among three states with the most improved payment error rate during 2006. The state cut its error rate in half in 2006. The 2006 rate was 4.64 percent, compared to 8.34 percent in 2005 and more than 11 percent in 2003.

"This is tremendous news," says Health & Welfare Director Richard "Dick" Armstrong. "The bonus is acknowledgement of all the hard work and dedication from the Division of Welfare staff. They have been diligent and focused on improving performance. They have a lot of reason to be proud today. Not only did we dramatically reduce our errors, but we developed a more efficient and accurate process that will sustain high quality service for years to come."

The Food Stamp error rate is a measurement that combines errors in overpayment and errors in underpayment of Food Stamps to program participants. The measurement is based on how many dollars a family will qualify to receive to buy food each month. If a state provides too many dollars or too few dollars, it is deemed an error.

The Department of Health & Welfare also was recognized for improvement in its negative error rate, which measures how often it approves or denies applications for Food Stamps. Idaho's error rate was 7.64 percent which is below the national average of more than eight percent. However, Idaho's improvement was not enough to receive an additional bonus.

"I am really pleased with the performance improvements," says Welfare Division Administrator Russ Barron. "We really stepped up and made the quality assurance process and review panels work. These improved numbers are a direct reflection of the dedication and hard work staff have put into this program."

Idaho's Food Stamp program served more than 92,000 individuals each month in 2006 — that's up 14,000 people from 2003. In 2006, the Department of Health & Welfare received nearly 67,000 family applications for Food Stamps.

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**(Editors:** for additional information or an interview, contact Ross Mason at 208-334-0693)